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DOCUMENTS

From the Proceedings of the American Convention of Abolition Societies may be obtained valuable information in the form of the reports as to slavery, the appeal of the anti-slavery groups to Congress, and their addresses to the citizens of the United States. There is unconsciously given in these documents most interesting facts as to what the Negro was doing and what was being done for him. The important documents falling within these three groups follow.

The Report of the Committee on the State of Slavery in the United States, being again considered, was amended and adopted as follows.

To the American Convention for the Abolition of Slavery, &c.

The committee appointed (at the last session of the Convention) on the state of slavery in the United States, beg leave to report as follows:

Your committee were rather at a loss to perceive the precise design of the Convention, in the appointment of a committee on the state of slavery in the United States. But have thought proper to review the subject; first with reference to its progress; secondly in reference to the situation or treatment of slaves; and thirdly in reference to the prospect of its diminution or final removal.

First. In reference to the progress of slavery in the United States, your committee find that at the time of the first census under the Constitution in 1790, there were 694,280 slaves in the Union. These were with the exception of about 40,000, confined to a surface of about 212,000 square miles. In 1800, the number was 889,118 on a surface of 289,000 square miles or nearly so! In 1810, the number was increased to 1,191,364 and covered an extent of territory of about 431,000 square miles! At the time of the last census in 1820, the slaves in the United States and territories amounted to 1,538,178, and your committee have good reason to believe that the number at the present time or at the census of 1830, will be found

to be about two millions, occupying a territory including Arkansas, of nearly 600,000 square miles!!

Your committee have been surprised at the result of their own enquiries, for they had fondly hoped that the dreadful evil was if not diminishing, at least advancing with less rapidity. From various estimates, on which your committee place much reliance, they are confirmed in the opinion, that the increase (independent of clandestine importations) must amount at the present time to at least near 50,000 per annum.

As this increase like that of population generally, is in its nature, a geometrical progression, it must continue to augment, as long as subsistence can be obtained. This view of the subject is truly alarming; but when we consider the extent of territory which is overspread by this foul blot on the map of our beloved country, the heart sickens at the prospect.

To behold 600,000 square miles of the best land in North America, teeming with slaves,—a surface greater, than that of many European kingdoms, held too by men who are constantly boasting of their love of liberty; sending up daily to Heaven, the sighs and groans of millions of broken hearts, while the sweat and tears and even the blood of thousands moisten its soil, must excite deep emotion in every breast, not dead to those feelings which become the patriot, or animate the christian. But furthermore your committee are of opinion that if the scheme, of adding a large portion of Mexican territory, to our south-western border, should be consummated, the price of slaves will be so enhanced and the facilities of smuggling so much increased, that the African slave trade will be greatly augmented, as well as the practice of kidnapping in the more eastern parts of our own country. So that upon the whole, your committee are of opinion, that slavery is fearfully on the increase, and that every effort is making, by many of those interested in its continuance, to multiply its victims and extend its influence. This state of things calls loudly on every friend of his country, on every friend of man, to use every effort in his power, to arrest the torrent of misery and crime.

Secondly. On the treatment of slaves,—your committee have long indulged an opinion which they believe is common with their fellow-citizens, that slaves in this country are somewhat better treated than formerly. This opinion seems to prevail to an extent which your committee fear, is not sustained by facts. A writer in

Niles's Register for 1818, says, speaking on this subject, "The favourable change which has occurred in the treatment of negro slaves in this state (Maryland) since the revolution, must be to every benevolent mind a source of very agreeable reflections, our oldest citizens well remember when it was very customary to inflict on the manacled and naked person of the slave, the most intolerable punishments for very trivial offences. *Within the last twenty years* it has been the practice to muster all the slaves on a farm once a week, and distribute to each his peck of corn, leaving him to walk several miles, to some neighbours hand mill, to grind it himself, under cover of night, when exhausted nature called for rest from the labours of the day; in many cases they received not an atom of animal food, and their usual bedding was a plank, or by particular kindness a single blanket."

The above writer does not specify any particulars in which the improvement spoken of is apparent, but we think all will admit that a very considerable improvement might be accomplished, and yet the treatment might be such as could not be called *good*. He adds however that "much remains to be done, which the obligation of *humanity* require."

Your committee are of opinion, that in consequence of what has been written, spoken, and done by the friends of abolition, much light has been diffused through the community even in the slave holding states, and many masters restrained by the force of public opinion, thus enlightened, have abstained from cruelties which they would otherwise have inflicted; yet we cannot but believe, that very much anguish of heart, and exquisite sufferings of body are endured by this unhappy race, even in Maryland: (and we believe they are used as well here, as in any other part of our country.)

The multitudes that are annually sold to the southern markets, by which parents and children are violently separated, and all the ties of consanguinity rent asunder, if no other indication of bad treatment were discovered; would itself speak volumes.

The treatment of slaves may be estimated with some degree of accuracy by the laws which are in force respecting them. The laws of the land are always understood to be intended for the protection of the subject, but with respect to negro slaves (in the slave states) they have an effect directly the reverse. So far from securing him in the enjoyment of happiness, his very life is placed at the mercy of any white man, (especially of his master or overseer) who may

take the opportunity to kill him in the absence of any other free white person. Resistance to the will of the master, may be punished with stripes, and if the resistance amount to striking, may be punished by imprisonment and whipping; and for a third offence the slave may suffer death! It will be perceived that by the operation of those laws, a virtuous female slave, may suffer death for defending her chastity against the ruffian assaults of a debauchee. The manner in which those laws are administered in some of the states, frequently occasions great outrages upon the common charities of our nature. The discretion rested in a court of two or three freeholders, or a single magistrate, over the persons of the accused is often exercised with great severity. In Stroud's Slave Laws, we have an account of the burning to death of a negro woman, under a law of South Carolina, so late as 1820. (See page 124, in the note.)

It appears also that the mental improvement of the slave is a thing generally deprecated by the master, and in some cases provided against by law. (See Niles's Register, April 21, 1821.)

How deplorable must be the state of that community, which supposed its safety to depend on keeping one half of its members totally ignorant, and not even able to read the Holy Scripture.

How contrary to the nature of man? how offensive in the sight of that God who "*has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth!*"

It furthermore appears that in transporting slaves from one part of the nation to another, either in the domestic slave trade or in large bodies by removals of planters, &c. they are usually chained and handcuffed, or otherwise manacled, like the vilest criminals, &c. &c.

In considering the treatment of slaves, your committee deem it necessary to notice the amount and quality of labour required of them. In some cases this is known to be extremely severe, and attended with many aggravating circumstances. Such as scarcity of supplies which are sometimes insufficient, and frequently of very inferior quality: exposure to disease, and want of proper attention in the incipient states of sickness. The cultivation of rice one of the great staples of the Carolinas, is an instance to illustrate this point. Mr. Adams in his Geography says, "the cultivation is wholly by negroes. No work can be imagined more laborious or more prejudicial to health. They are obliged to stand in water

often times mid-leg high, exposed to the scorching heat of the sun, and breathing an atmosphere poisoned by the unwholesome effluvia of an oozy bottom and stagnant water.”

It appears therefore, that in the treatment of slaves in general, as well as in the legal provisions respecting them, the interest, convenience, security and inclinations of the master, constitute the only object in view; the comfort or even safety or health of the slave makes no part of the consideration, any further than it is supposed, to promote one or the other of the former. Finally after taking a rapid view of this part of the subject, your committee are led to doubt whether the evils of slavery are materially lessened in certain portions of our beloved country, notwithstanding all that has been done in favour of manumission, colonization and abolition of the slave trade, &c. &c. and what it might have been at this time, if no efforts had been made to arrest its progress, is beyond human wisdom to determine.

Thirdly, In reference to the diminution or the final extinction of slavery in the Union, your committee remark, that it seems to be the expectation of all, that it must at some period cease to exist, an evil so tremendous—a practice so completely at war with all the principles of justice, mercy and truth, so repugnant to all the best feelings of human nature, and fraught with such fearful consequences to society; cannot but excite in every reflecting mind a strong desire that it should be removed. In view of the divine government, which rules all with justice and righteousness, the human mind is naturally led to expect that such oppression and cruelty must have an end.

But how this revolution in society is to be brought about, perhaps no human foresight can yet divine. If our slave holding fellow citizens could be induced to establish schools for the instruction of the rising generation among the blacks, and thus qualify them for self government, which every principle of equity requires they should do, and to teach them by precept and example the importance of moral obligation; one of the greatest obstacles would be removed. If they would introduce among them a sacred regard for the social duties, arising from marriage, and from the relations subsisting between parents and children; they might with perfect safety and great advantage to the state, be emancipated. A few years of effort of this kind, would form a class of men from whom the nation would not only have nothing to fear; but on whom

she could safely rely for aid in her greatest emergency. In their present condition of abject slavery what can be expected of them, but that they should lay hold on every apparent opportunity, of regaining their freedom, and ever retorting on the masters the evils they have suffered?

Facts uniformly sustain this position; what multitudes of slaves joined the enemy during his temporary invasions of our southern coasts in the late war, notwithstanding all the efforts of the whites to prevent it? While on the contrary none were found more efficient in repelling his attacks than the free blacks of the south. Such was their zeal and valour in defence of Louisiana, that General Jackson, the present Chief Magistrate of the Union; bestowed on them the following eulogium.

“ TO THE MEN OF COLOUR.”

“ Soldiers! From the shores of Mobile I collected you to arms; I invited you to share in the perils, and to divide the glory of your white countrymen. I expected much from you, for I was not uninformed of those qualities which must render you formidable to an invading enemy. I knew that you could endure hunger and thirst, and all the hardships of war.—I knew that you loved the land of your nativity! and that like ourselves you had to defend all that is dear to man. But you *surpass my hopes*. I found in you united to those qualities, that noble enthusiasm which impels to great deeds.” In a subsequent communication, the General in numerating the officers whose commands had distinguished themselves, makes honourable mention of the one who led these troops in the different actions of that memorable campaign. There are many circumstances which encourage the hope, that the time is drawing nigh when the African race shall enjoy the sweets of liberty. Their successful attempt at self government in St. Domingo, under so many disadvantages, the abolition of slavery in several of the South American provinces, and recently in Mexico, and the efforts of the British nation in their behalf, together with many other co-operating causes seem to indicate the interposition of Divine Providence in favour of the oppressed. In HIS Almighty hand, the most inefficient causes sometimes produce the most astonishing effects, and often the very means made use of to rivet the chains of oppression are so overruled by Him as to burst the bonds they were designed to perpetuate. We may therefore rest assured

that He will in his own good time crown our labours with complete success, by bringing deliverance to the captive "and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound." In the mean time let every friend of the cause remember that he has a duty to perform. Let the result be what it may, he is equally bound to oppose as far as possible, the growing evil.

It becomes us therefore to enquire how this may most effectually be done. Our opposition should be peaceable but firm. It should be the opposition of brothers not of enemies, it may be shewn by acts of kindness and forbearance, but it *must be opposition* and it *must be shown*. It may exhibit itself in peaceable efforts to protect the rights of free blacks, and instructing their offspring, or it may be shown by rational attempts to enlighten the public mind on the subject, or in encouragement of those publications that are so employed; or by memorials to congress and the state legislature, &c. &c.

Our means of considerable efficiency for exciting the public mind to the consideration of the injustice and impolicy of slavery, may probably be found in the perserving efforts now making on the part of many friends of abolition to encourage the creation and consumption of the products of free labour.

We cannot withhold the tribute of our respect and admiration from those patriotic females, who have associated for this purpose both in England and America, and heartily, recommend their example, as one worthy of universal imitation.¹

WM. KESLEY, Chairman.

A TABLE SHEWING THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND REQUISITIONS
OF THE CONVENTION OF 1796, AND OF FORMER CON-
VENTIONS, AND HOW FAR THEY HAVE HITHERTO
BEEN COMPLIED WITH BY EACH SOCIETY.

1. *To send delegates to a Convention to meet at Philadelphia in May, 1797.*

New-York Society,	complied.
New-Jersey society,	ditto.
Pennsylvania society,	ditto.
Maryland society, (<i>at Baltimore</i>)	ditto.
Choptank society, (<i>Maryland</i>)	ditto.
Alexandria society (<i>Virginia</i>)	ditto.
Virginia society, (<i>at Richmond</i>)	ditto.

¹ American Convention, Abolition Societies, Minutes, 1821-1829, pp. 42-48.

Rhode-Island, Connecticut, Washington (*Pennsylvania*,) Wilmington, (*Delaware*,) Delaware, Chester-town (*Maryland*,) Winchester, (*Virginia*) and Kentucky societies sent none.

II. *To transmit certified copies of all the laws in the respective states relating to slavery; as well of those repealed as of those in force.*

Connecticut transmitted	in 1795.
New-York,	in 1797.
New-Jersey,	in 1796.
Pennsylvania,	in 1797.
Maryland,	in 1797.
Virginia and Alexandria.	in 1797.

a copy of professor Tucker's dissertation on slavery, which contains the substance of all the laws of Virginia respecting slavery from its settlement till 1794. Copies of the laws since that period also sent.

Rhode Island, Delaware, and Kentucky societies have not yet transmitted.

III. *To forward correct lists of the officers and other members of each respective society.*

New-York complied in 1796 and 1797, number of members two hundred and fifty.

New-Jersey complied partially.

Pennsylvania complied in 1797. Members five hundred and ninety-one.

Wilmington complied in 1796. Members about sixty.

Maryland complied in 1797. Members two hundred and thirty-one.

Choptank complied in 1797. Members twenty-five.

Alexandria complied in 1797. Members sixty-two.

Virginia complied in 1796 and 1797. Members one hundred and forty-seven.

Rhode-Island, Connecticut, Washington, Delaware, Chester-town, Winchester and Kentucky societies have not yet sent lists of their members.

IV. *An account of the proceedings of each society in relieving persons unlawfully held in bondage.*

New-York. Since January 1796, have had complaints from ninety

persons, Africans or of African descent—twenty-nine freed on the law prohibiting importation—seven as free born—two unsuccessful—heavy damages recovered in some instances—twenty-one cases now in suit—nineteen under consideration.

New-Jersey, Society. Many manumissions have been effected since January 1796, but no precise information is yet received to what number and under what circumstances.

Pennsylvania Society. It appears from the minutes of the acting committee of the society, that many hundreds of Africans have been liberated through their aid since the institution of the society.

Wilmington Society. Has sent a list of persons liberated by their agency up to 1796, amounting to eighty since 1788.

Maryland Society at Baltimore. A variety of suits were instituted against the unlawful holders of slaves last year, and in consequence many have been liberated—there are several suits now pending in law, which are expected to have the like favorable issue.

Choctank Society. This society has exerted itself in favor of the Africans, for seven years; and been the instrument of liberating more than sixty individuals, and has failed but in a single application to a court of justice in their behalf.

Alexandria Society. Twenty-six complaints made to the society—six persons relieved on the law against importation; five will probably be relieved, the other fourteen cases on which as well as on the above suits are pending are doubtful. A suit in Norfolk court and one in North Carolina now carrying on at the expense of this society.

Virginia Society. Nothing of material importance since the convention of 1796. Suits commenced before now pending in behalf of between twenty and thirty persons.

Rhode-Island, Connecticut, Washington, Delaware, Chester-town, Winchester, and Kentucky societies sent no account.

V. *A Statement of the condition of the blacks in each State both bond and free, with respect to the property of the free, and the employment and moral conduct of all.*

New-York. The number of people of color in the state of New-York not known—exceeds two thousand—in the city names of one thousand collected—of these more than half are free, employed as servants, labourers, sailors, mechanics, &c.—a few are small traders—condition tolerable—many in town and country freeholders—several worth from three hundred to thirteen hundred dollars—various associations among the free blacks for mutual

support, benefit and improvement—one has a lot for a burying ground and the site of a church worth fifteen hundred dollars. In a state of progressive improvement.

New-Jersey. Condition, as to enjoyments of life and respectability, much the same as in New-York.

Pennsylvania. Complied with in 1796. See the minutes of the convention of that year—page 20 and 21.

Maryland at Baltimore & Choptank. The condition of the blacks from the information this society has received is greatly ameliorated, and some few of the free are enabled to provide for themselves without manual labor—moral conduct equal to that of the whites in like circumstances—minute information not yet obtained.

Alexandria. Generally slaves—their treatment less rigorous than formerly—moral conduct of the free generally good—as labourers preferred to the whites.

From Rhode-Island Connecticut, Washington, Wilmington, Delaware, Chester-town, Virginia, Winchester and Kentucky Societies,—none sent.

VI. *Reports of trials and adjudications relative to Africans.*

New-York. A bill for the gradual abolition of slavery brought into the Legislature at their last session, but postponed till the next session.

New-Jersey. A bill brought into the last session of the Legislature for a gradual abolition of slavery which is postponed to the next session as in New-York.

Pennsylvania. A bill for the total abolition of slavery was brought into and read in the House of Representatives near the close of the last session of the Legislature, but lies over to the next session.

Maryland at Baltimore. No attempt has been made since the Convention of 1796.

Alexandria. Have drawn up and mean to present to the next Legislature, a remonstrance against a late law of the State which is peculiarly severe against Africans.

Rhode-Island, Connecticut, Washington, Wilmington, Delaware, Chester-town, Choptank, Virginia, Winchester, and Kentucky societies transmitted no information.

VIII. *The progress made in extending to Africans the benefits of instruction.*

New-York. House and lot for a school purchased by the society

since January 1796—school has existed many years—more flourishing now than ever—property of the society for its accommodation worth upwards of three thousand five hundred dollars—annual expense of the school one thousand dollars—has a master, usher and mistress—scholars taught reading, penmanship, arithmetic, English grammar and geography—girls (additionally) needle work—number one hundred and twenty-two—boys sixty three girls fifty-nine—improve fast and behave as well as any other children—evening school in the winter for free blacks, adults—taught by the master and usher of the society's school—number, forty-four—usher a black man.

New-Jersey. Nothing done by the society—a bill is now pending before the Legislature providing for the instruction of all children in the state, which, if carried, will include the Africans as well as the whites.

Pennsylvania. Within the city and liberties of Philadelphia there are at present seven schools for the education of people of colour; at which perhaps near three hundred scholars of both sexes usually attend—two other schools are about to be opened for the same purpose.

Maryland at Baltimore. Several children of Africans and other people of color now under a course of instruction—an academy (of which no notice was given to the last convention) will be opened the ensuing season, and suitable teachers provided.

Alexandria. A Sunday school opened by this society in December, 1795, for the reception of Africans and their descendants—the number of scholars who usually attend is one hundred and eight—they are instructed in reading, penmanship and arithmetic.

From Rhode-Island, Connecticut, Washington, Wilmington, Delaware, Chester-town, Choptank, Virginia, Winchester, and Kentucky societies—no information received.

IX. *To establish periodical discourses on the subject of slavery and the means of its abolition.*

Connecticut. No information this year—there have been seven or eight discourses delivered before the society, the greater part of which have been printed and circulated extensively.

New-York. The first annual discourse delivered before this society the twelfth of April, 1797.

Pennsylvania. Not deemed necessary in this state, where the general sentiments of the people are, in a great degree, congenial with those of the society.

Maryland. Complied with.

Rhode-Island, New-Jersey, Washington, Wilmington, Delaware, Chestertown, Choptank, Alexandria, Virginia, Winchester, and Kentucky Societies transmitted no information on the subject.

X. *To keep accurate registers of all deeds of manumission executed within the precincts of each society.*

New-York. Attended to by this society from the first, so far as depended on itself.

Pennsylvania. A register of manumissions kept by the acting committee.

Maryland at Baltimore, and Choptank. The society preserve a register—and all manumissions are matter of record in the county courts.

Alexandria. A register is kept by the society, manumissions are recorded in the court of Common Pleas.

Virginia. Deeds of emancipation are recorded in the county courts.

From Rhode-Island, Connecticut, New-Jersey, Washington, Wilmington, Delaware, Chester-town, Winchester and Kentucky societies—no information.

XI. *To distribute suitable publications tending to promote the design of the institutions.*

New-York. Attended to partially.

New-Jersey. Attended to generally.

Pennsylvania. Faithfully attended to.

Alexandria. Attended to, and a new publication is soon to be made on the subject of slavery.

From Rhode-Island, Connecticut, Washington, Wilmington, Delaware, Maryland, Chester-town, Choptank, Virginia, Winchester, and Kentucky societies—no information.

XII. *To endeavour to free negroes from St. Domingo retained here as slaves, contrary to the decree of the National Convention of France.*

Pennsylvania. Acted on as cases have occurred—from the other societies—no information.

XIII. *To discourage the use of articles manufactured by slaves.*

No particular measures on this subject are represented as being adopted by any of the societies.

XIV. *To distribute the address to the free people of color from the convention of 1796.*

New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Alexandria societies,—done.

Choptank society. Not received till late by this society.

Virginia society. Done in part.

From Rhode-Island, Connecticut, Washington, Wilmington, Delaware, Chester-town, Winchester, and Kentucky societies—no information.

XV. *To send copies of the constitutions of the respective societies.*

Connecticut. Sent.

New-York. Sent the original in 1796, and the revised one in 1797.

New-Jersey. Sent in 1796.

Pennsylvania. ditto.

Wilmington. ditto.

Maryland. ditto.

Alexandria. Sent in 1797.

Virginia. Sent in 1796.

Rhode-Island, Washington, Delaware, Chester-town, Choptank, Winchester, and Kentucky societies sent none.²

A PLAN FOR THE GENERAL EMANCIPATION OF SLAVES.

“*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness that to secure these rights, governments were instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.*” (Declaration of Independence.)

These self-evident truths, thus solemnly promulgated, and always admitted in theory; at least in relation to ourselves; are well-known to be partially denied or disregarded, in most sections of the union, in relation to the descendents of the African race. That a nation professing the justice of its laws, should contain a population, amounting to nearly one-seventh of the whole, who know little of the operation of those laws, except as instruments of oppression, is one of those political phenomena, which prove how little the patriot's boast, or the creator's declamation is guided by the light of truth.

² Minutes of the Proceedings of the Fourth American Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1797, pp. 37-43.

It must be admitted that it would neither be politic nor safe, for the present system of slavery in the United States to be long continued, without providing some wise and certain means of eventual emancipation.

Slavery with its present degrading characteristics, is a state of actual hostility between master and slave, in which "a revolution of the wheel of fortune, in exchange of situation, is among possible events; and this may become probably by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take part with us in such a contest."—*Jefferson*.

It is a truth generally acknowledged, that Slavery is an evil, not only by those whom principle, or education have taught to proscribe the practice, but by men of reflection, even in the very vortex of slavery. To condemn then, what few, if any, will presume to defend is rendered unnecessary; and the ingenuity of the philanthropist would be more judiciously exercised in devising a practicable remedy for this deep-rooted disease, than in heaping reproaches upon these, who, by the conduct of their ancestors, are placed in the condition of masters of slaves. Few of those who from their childhood, have been placed in situations far removed from the scenes which slavery exhibits, can fully appreciate the difficulties, the vexations, and the anxieties, incident to the life of a slaveholder. To devise a plan, then, by which the condition, both of the master and slave may be meliorated, is a desideratum in the policy of this country:—A plan which will promote the immediate interest of the master, in the same ratio, that the slave is made to rise in the scale of moral and intellectual improvement; and which will eventuate in the ultimate enfranchisement of the long injured and degraded descendants of Africa. The evils of slavery being generally acknowledged, and its impolicy fully evinced, the important question which remains to be solved, will naturally present itself: What are the means by which this evil is to be removed, consistently with the safety of the master, and the happiness of the slave? Perhaps to some, this question, considered on the ground of absolute justice, may appear of easy solution: *Immediate, universal emancipation*.

But however pleasing the prospect may be to the philanthropist, of getting clear of one of the evils of slavery, yet a full examination of local circumstances, must convince us that this would be, to cut, rather than untie the Gordian knot.

Reformation on a large scale, is commonly slow. Habits long established, are not easily and suddenly changed. But were it possible to induce the inhabitants of the slaveholding states, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to let loose at once the whole tide of black population, it may reasonably be questioned whether such a measure would not produce as much evil as it would cure. Besides, such a measure, if it were practicable, would fall short of simple justice. We owe to that injured race, an immense debt, which the liberation of their bodies alone would not liquidate. It has been the policy of the slaveholder to keep the man whom he has doomed to interminable servitude, in the lowest state of mental degradation: to withhold from him as much as possible the means of improving the talents which nature has given him. In short, to reduce him as near to the condition of a machine as a rational being could be. Every inducement—every excitement, to the exertion and development of native talent and genius, is wanting in the slave.—Hence, to throw such a being, thus degraded, thus brutalized, upon society, and then expect him to exercise those rights which are the birthright of every son and daughter of Adam, with advantage to himself, or to the community upon which he is thrown, is to suppose that the laws established for the government of universal nature, should in this case be changed. As well might we expect a man to be born in the full maturity of his mental faculties, or an infant to run before it had learned the use of its limbs.

A plan, then, for universal emancipation, to be practicable, must be gradual. The slave must be made to pass through a state of pupilage and monority, to fit him for the enjoyment and exercise of rational liberty.

“ If then the extremes of emancipation, and perpetual, unlimited slavery be dangerous,” and impolitic, “ the safe and advisable measure must be between them.” And this brings us again the question, How can we get clear of the evils of slavery, with safety to the master, and advantage to the slave? For the solution of this difficult problem, the following outlines of a plan for a gradual, but *general* and *universal* emancipation is proposed. Let the slaves be attached to the soil,—give them an interest in the land they cultivate. Place them in the same situation as their masters, as the peasantry of Russia, in relation to their landlords. Let wise and salutary laws be enacted, in the several slave holding states, for their general government. These laws should provide for the means

of extending to the children of every slave, the benefits of school learning. The practice of arbitrary punishment for the most trivial offences, should be abolished.

An important step towards the accomplishment of this plan, would be, to prohibit by law the migration, or transportation of slaves from one state to another:—and also to provide, that no slave should be sold, out of the county, or town in which his master resides, without his own consent. Provision should then be made for the introduction of a system of general instruction on each farm or plantation; each slave who has a family should be furnished with a hut, and a portion of land to cultivate for his own use; for which he would pay to the landlord an annual rent. For each day he was employed by the master or landlord, he should be allowed a stipulated price: out of the proceeds of his stipulated wages, those things necessary for his comfortable maintenance, should be deducted; if furnished by the master.

The time given him to cultivate his allotment of ground should be deducted from his annual hire. A wise and equitable system of laws, adapted to the condition of blacks, should be established for their government. Then a character would be formed among them; acts of diligence and fidelity would meet their appropriate reward, and negligence and crime would be followed by their merited chastisement. The execution of this plan, in its fullest extent, would be followed by increased profits to the landholder.

It would be productive of incalculable advantage to the slave, both in his civil, and moral condition:—And thus the interest of the master, and the melioration of the condition of the slave, would be gradually and reciprocally advanced in the progress of this experiment. Although legislative provisions would greatly facilitate the adoption of this plan, it is not necessary for individuals to wait the movement of government. Any one may introduce it on his own plantation, and reap many of its most important advantages.

The plan now proposed is not new. It is not a Utopian and visionary theory, unsupported by experience. It has been successfully tried in the Island of Barbadoes, by the late Joshua Steele; and the result exceeded his most sanguine expectations. “The first principles, of his plan,” says Mr. Dickson, “are the plain ones, of treating the slaves as human creatures: moving them to action by the hope of reward, as well as the fear of punishment: giving them

out of their own labours, wages and land, sufficient to afford them the plainest necessaries:—And protecting them against the capricious violence, too often of ignorant, unthinking, or unprincipled, and perhaps drunken men and boys, invested with arbitrary powers, as their managers, and ‘drivers.’ His plan is founded in nature, and has nothing in it of rash innovation. It does not hurry forward a new order of things;—it recommends no fine projects of ticklish experiments; but, by a few safe and easy steps, and a few simple applications of English law, opens the way for the gradual introduction of a better system.” “To advance above three hundred debased field Negroes, who had never before moved without the whip, to a state nearly resembling that of contented, honest and industrious servants; and after paying them for their labour, to triple, in a few years, the annual net clearance of his estates—these were great achievements, for an aged man, in an untried field of improvement, preoccupied by inveterate vulgar prejudices. He has indeed accomplished all that was really doubtful or difficult in the undertaking; and perhaps all that is at present desirable, either to owner or slave. For he has ascertained as a fact, what was before only known to the learned as a theory, and to practical men as a paradox:—that the paying of slaves for their labour, does actually produce a very great profit to their owners.”³

TO THE AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR PROMOTING THE ABOLITION OF
SLAVERY, AND IMPROVING THE CONDITION OF THE AFRICAN
RACE.

The Committee appointed to take into consideration the subject of the Internal Slave Trade, and report such facts as they may deem suitable for publication, in relation to it,

Respectfully Report—That they consider the subject as one of the greatest magnitude and importance that can gain the attention of this Convention. That such a trade should be permitted to be practised by the Laws of the United States of America, is a matter of the deepest regret, and can only be reconciled by a consideration of the frailty of all human institutions. From the short time afforded the Committee they have been unable as fully to consider the subject as they desired, but from the enquiry they have been able to make, the following appears to be at present the principal markets for the sale of human beings in the United States, viz. the

³ American Convention Abolition Societies, Minutes, 1821, pp. 50-55.

Territories of Florida and Arkansas, the states of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana; these states and territories are supplied with their victims of oppression and cruelty, from the states of Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Eastern and Northern parts of Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. The principal depots where men, women, and children are collected, frequently kept in irons and exhibited for sale are—Patty Cannon's house, situated on the confines of Delaware and Maryland; a large establishment in the city of Baltimore; the Jail of Baltimore County; one at Saddler's Cross Roads, and the Jail in the city of Washington a public tavern in the same place, and several places in the town of Alexandria; and in most of the towns of Virginia, and in the city of Charleston, S. C. In addition to the evils of legalized Slavery, we may add, as growing out of the trade, acts of kidnaping not less cruel than those committed on the Coast of Africa. Individuals are well known, who have made a business of decoying free people of Color on board their vessels, and of selling them for Slaves; two instances came particularly under observation in one of our principal sea ports, (and we believe they are numerous in other places,) one a boy of about 12 years of age, was decoyed on board a vessel and taken to one of the above places of deposite, from thence sent in their chain of communication to the home of the purchaser. Another instance occurred by the next trip of the vessel, of a woman being taken in the same manner, who on attempting to leave the cabin was knocked down, gagged, and severely whipped, to intimidate, and make her acknowledge herself a slave. She was taken to the same place of deposite, but apprehending it was to be searched, they removed her with two others, free persons, (one of them stolen within twelve miles of the place,) to the woods, where they were chained, with but little clothing, and exposed day and night in the open air; one of the persons so confined released himself from the tree to which he was attached and with an axe extricated the others. The woman above alluded to has since arrived and gave the information, and in addition says, they have pits to conceal their captives when close pursuit is apprehended, which they cover with earth and leaves. It may be asked, as the persons are known, why not bring them to justice? We may reply, that notwithstanding we could bring some of the persons last alluded to, to identify their kidnappers, yet their evidence, on account of their color, is not allowed to be received in the Courts of Slaveholding States. Many other instances have occurred: and many in-

stances of persons who were entitled to their freedom after serving a limited time, being sold into irredeemable Slavery in other states are deplorably numerous; the covert manner of doing which is generally such as to elude detection. It is suggested whether Legislative enactments requiring that persons so situated, should be required to be registered every time they change masters would not obviate in some measure this evil—humane persons could then trace individuals so circumstanced, and bring offenders to justice:—all which is respectfully submitted.

Some of your Committee have been the unwilling witnesses of gangs of men, women and children, being driven off in chains from some of the above places to be sold like cattle. The shrieks and groans of the wretched victims, would have melted any heart but that of a Slave Trader, steeled by avarice or petrified by cruelty: and as if in utter defiance of the laws of God and man:—the Sabbath is the day generally chosen for receiving and sending off the unfortunate objects of their cupidity and so blunted has public opinion become from the long existence of this unhallowed traffic, that individuals in the city of Alexandria, publicly advertise their having prepared their prisons and furnished themselves with every accommodation for selling men, women, and innocent children, to any purchaser.

The number transported by sea from the single port of Baltimore by a noted trader of that place is believed to exceed several hundreds per annum. How long, may we ask, is our land to be polluted with such abominations? Is there no fear of the awful vengeance of him who has declared, “Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bonds of wickedness, and that ye let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?” If cruelty to the Israelites, (and their acts of oppression was mildness, in comparison with ours,) what may we not expect, we who have received the blessings of divine revelation, who proclaim the goodness of God, in having freed us from the political bondage of Great Britain.

Respectfully submitted, on behalf of the Committee,

—THOMAS SHIPLEY, *Chairman*.⁴

TO THE AMERICAN CONVENTION, &c.

The Committee appointed at the last Convention to procure information of the cultivation of Sugar, Cotton, &c. by free labor, &c.

⁴ American Convention Abolition Societies, Minutes, 1828, pp. 21-24.

Respectfully Report—That they have given some attention to the subject of their appointment, but have not been as successful as could have been desired. They have been enabled to procure some general information, relative to the production of sugar and cotton by the labor of emancipated slaves, and other free persons of color, in the West Indian Islands and on the American Continent; but have not had it in their power to obtain such particulars concerning it as will shew the extent of the pecuniary advantages which this mode of proceeding undoubtedly possesses over that of cultivating the land by slave labor.

We are credibly informed that the article of sugar is now produced by free labor, in two or more of the West Indian Islands, of a quality fully equal to that of any other, and is, also, brought into the market upon quite as favourable terms. Coffee is also produced in abundance in the island of Hayti, and some parts of South America, by free labor. These productions, unstained by slavery, may now be had in the cities of New York and Philadelphia, and likewise at Wilmington in Delaware.

In the Territory of Florida, we learn, that a company, composed principally of citizens of the United States, have purchased a large tract of land, with the view of cultivating the sugar cane and other tropical productions, by the labor of free men. Samples of the sugar made by this company have been shewn to some of the members of your committee, and have been pronounced to be of a good quality. In Louisiana, likewise, we are informed that sundry persons are engaged in producing sugar in the same way, but we have not ascertained to what extent they have carried their experiments.

Sundry cotton planters in the states of North Carolina and Alabama, have, for several years cultivated their lands by free hands. They have disposed of considerable quantities of cotton in New York and New England, and we are informed appear well satisfied to continue the practice of employing free laborers to the total exclusion of that of slaves.

A gentleman in Rhode Island has manufactured some of this cotton separately into coarse muslins, which may also be had as above stated. A few of the citizens of Pennsylvania and Delaware, have likewise purchased some of this cotton, and manufactured it into calicoes and other fabrics. We presume, however, that this has not been done to any considerable extent; neither have we ascer-

tained the degree of encouragement held out to those engaged in the enterprise.

The article of tobacco, has, for some years, been successfully cultivated in the state of Ohio, where it is known that slavery does not exist; and we learn that it can be afforded in the Baltimore market at a lower price than that produced in the state of Maryland, by the labor of Slaves, after defraying the expenses of transportation some hundreds of miles further than the latter. But we are informed that even in the Province of Upper Canada, sundry colored persons from Kentucky, have made a settlement, and have raised large quantities of this article which has been disposed of to advantage in some of our Atlantic ports.

But the most particular account your committee have obtained respecting the experiment of free, contrasted with slave labor, has been obtained from Ward's Mexico, a work lately published in London. The author was an Envoy of the British Government, and the most entire reliance may be placed on his statement, which, as in every other fair experiment completely proves the advantages of cultivation by freemen. It appears, from his account, that the experiment was tried in consequence of the difficulty of procuring slaves during the war, and the great mortality which always took place on the first introduction of the slaves, from a change of climate. Being desirous to produce a race of free laborers, a large number of slaves were manumitted and encouraged to intermarry with the native Indians, which they soon did to a great extent, and so beneficial was the plan found to the master's interest, that in the year 1808 on most of the largest estates, there was not a slave to be found. From a personal inspection the author above alluded to declares that their tasks were performed with great precision and rapidity, (vol. 1, p. 67, 68.). A most important improvement appears also to have taken place; the whip being banished from the field and the females released from the field labor. From 360 to 450 tons of sugar are produced by 150 free laborers, while in Cuba, where the soil is superior in fertility the same number produce but 180 tons.

Should the Convention think proper the committee are willing to continue the further investigation of the subject.

Respectfully submitted,

B. LUNDY, Chairman.⁵

⁵ American Convention Abolition Societies, Minutes, 1828, pp. 25-27.

TO THE AMERICAN CONVENTION,—The committee appointed to procure information in relation to the culture of sugar, cotton, &c. on this continent by free labor,

Respectfully State—That owing to the inadequacy of the means to make the requisite investigations, your committee has not been able since the last session of the Convention to acquire much information of any farther general facts. The following notice of the cultivation of sugar in Mexico, to which your committee then briefly advertised has been obtained through the medium of the London Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter for August, 1829. It is an extract of a letter from Mr. Ward, Mexican Envoy of the British Government to the Right Honourable George Canning, viz.

Mexico, March 13, 1826.

“ SIR,—The possibility of introducing a system of free labour into the West India Islands having been so much discussed in England, I conceived that it might not be uninteresting to His Majesty’s Government to receive some details respecting the result of the experiment in this country, where it certainly has had a fair trial.

“ I accordingly took advantage of Mr. Morier’s prolonged stay here to visit the Valley of Cuernavaca, and Cuantla Amilpas, which supplies a great part of the federation with sugar and coffee, although not a single slave is at present employed in their cultivation.

“ I have the honour to inclose a sketch of the observations which I was enabled to make upon this journey, together with such details as I have thought best calculated to show both the scale upon which these estates are worked, and the complete success with which the abolition of the slavery has, in this instance been attended.

“ The valley which extends almost uninterruptedly from Cuernavaca to Cuantla Amilpas and Juncar (covering a space of about forty miles,) is situated on the road to Acapulco, at the foot of the first range of mountains by which the descent from the Table Land towards the south-west commences, about fifty miles from the Capital.

“ It is about 2,000 feet lower than the Table Land of Mexico. The difference of temperature is proportionably great, so that two days are sufficient to transport the traveller into the very midst of Tierra Caliente.

“ It is believed that the sugar-cane was first planted there about one hundred years ago; from that time the number of sugar-estates

has gone on increasing, until there is now hardly an acre of ground on the whole plain which is not turned to account.

“The cultivation was originally carried on entirely by slaves, who were purchased at Vera Cruz, at from 300 to 400 dollars each.

“It was found, however, that this system was attended with considerable inconvenience, it being impossible to secure a sufficient supply of slaves during a war. The losses likewise, at all times, were great, as many of the slaves were unable to support the fatigue and changes of temperature, to which they were exposed on the journey from Vera Cruz to Curnavaca, and perished, either on the road, or soon after their arrival.

“Several of the great proprietors were induced by these circumstances to give liberty to a certain number of their slaves annually, and by encouraging marriages between them and the Indians of the country, to propagate a race of free labourers, who might be employed when a supply of Slaves was no longer to be obtained.

“This plan proved so eminently successful that on some of the largest estates there was not a single slave in the year 1808.

“The policy of the measure became still more apparent on the breaking out of the revolution in 1810.

“The planters who had not adopted the system of gradual emancipation before that period saw themselves abandoned, and were forced, in many instances, to give up working their estates, as their slaves took advantage of the approach of the insurgents to join them en masse; while those who had provided themselves with a mixed cast of free labourers, retained even during the worst times, a sufficient number of men to enable them to continue to cultivate their lands, although upon a smaller scale.”

The same work for September 1829, speaking of free and slave labour, remarks.

“The controversy is fast tending to its termination. The march of events will scarcely leave room much longer, either for misrepresentation or misapprehension. The facilities already given in Bengal by Lord W. Bentinck, to the investment of British capital and the development of British skill in the cultivation of the soil; the almost certainty that those fiscal regulations which have hitherto depressed the growth of sugar in Bengal, and prevented the large increase of its imports into this country, will soon be repealed; the prospect of an early removal of the other restrictions which still fetter the commerce of our Eastern possessions: the rapidly increasing population and prosperity of Haiti; the official statements of

Mr. Ward, as to the profitable culture of sugar by free labour in Mexico; and the rapid extension of the manufacture of beet root sugar in France; a prelude as we conceive, to its introduction into this country, and especially into Ireland; all these circumstances combined, afford a promise which can scarcely fail of seeing a death blow inflicted on the culture of sugar by slave-labour, which all the misrepresentations of all the slave holders in the world, with all their clamourous partisans in this country cannot avert, or even long retard.”

Since their views have been directed to the subject, your committee are fully satisfied that its further investigation will be highly important; and that at no very distant period, *the results of very interesting experiments nearer home may be obtained.*

Respectfully Submitted,

B. LUNDY, Chairman.⁶

Baltimore, December 1, 1829.

AN ACT TO PROHIBIT THE CARRYING ON THE SLAVE-TRADE, FROM THE UNITED STATES TO ANY FOREIGN PLACE OR COUNTRY.

Section I. *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled.* That no citizen or citizens of the United States, or foreigner, or any other person coming into, or residing within the same, shall, for himself or any other person whatsoever, either as master, factor or owner, build, fit, equip, load or otherwise prepare any ship or vessel, within any port or place of the said United States; nor shall cause any ship or vessel to sail from any port or place within the same, for the purpose of carrying on any trade or traffic in slaves, to any foreign country; or for the purpose of procuring, from any foreign kingdom, place or country, the inhabitants of such kingdom, place or country, to be transported to any foreign country, port or place whatever, to be sold or disposed of, as slaves: And if any ship or vessel shall be so fitted out, as aforesaid, for the said purposes, or shall be caused to sail, so as aforesaid, every such ship or vessel, her tackle, furniture, apparel and other appurtenances, shall be forfeited to the United States; and shall be liable to be seized, prosecuted and condemned, in any of the circuit courts or district court for the district, where the said ship or vessel may be found and seized.

⁶ American Convention Abolition Societies, Minutes, 1829, pp. 16-18.

Section II. *And be it further enacted*, That all and every person, so building, fitting out, equipping, loading, or otherwise preparing, or sending away, any ship or vessel, knowing, or intending, that the same shall be employed in such trade or business, contrary to the true intent and meaning of this act, or any ways aiding or abetting therein, shall severally forfeit and pay the sum of two thousand dollars, one moiety thereof, to the use of the United States, and the other moiety thereof, to the use of him or her, who shall sue for the prosecute the same.

Section III. *And be it further enacted*, That the owner, master or factor of each and every foreign ship or vessel, clearing out for any of the coasts or kingdoms of Africa, or suspected to be intended for the Slave-trade, and the suspicion being declared to the officer of the customs, by any citizen, on oath or affirmation, and such information being to the satisfaction of the said officer, shall first give bond with sufficient sureties, to the Treasurer of the United States, that none of the natives of Africa, or any other foreign country or place, shall be taken on board the said ship or vessel, to be transported, or sold as slaves, in any other foreign port or place whatever, within nine months thereafter.

Section IV. *And be it further enacted*, That if any citizen or citizens of the United States shall, contrary to the true intent and meaning of this act, take on board, receive or transport any such persons, as above described, in this act, for the purpose of selling them as slaves, as aforesaid, he or they shall forfeit and pay, for each and every person, so received on board, transported, or sold as aforesaid, the sum of two hundred dollars, to be recovered in any court of the United States, proper to try the same, the one moiety thereof, to the use of the United States, and the other moiety to the use of such person or persons, who shall sue for and prosecute the same.

FREDERICK AUGUSTUS MUHLENBERG,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

JOHN ADAMS, *Vice President of the United
States, and President of the Senate.*

Approved—March the twenty second, 1794,

Go. Washington,
President of the United States.